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UNITED MEDICAL WORKERS HOLD CONFERENCE

From 22 to 25 March 1949 the United Medical Workers Union met in Moscow. The delegates heard reports submitted by 45 representatives of various medical enterprises. The conference also explained the Party line to be followed by medical unions.

23 March Morning Session

The delegates heard a report given by M. Sharipov, representative of the republic committee of the Professional Unions USSR. He stated that the professional union organizations are not doing enough to eliminate the various shortcomings of the Public Health Service. The unification of hospitals and polyclinics has contributed much toward improving the quality of medical aid available to the peoples of the USSR, but unfortunately, only about 80 percent of the hospitals and polyclinics in the USSR have been unified. In many places this reform has taken on a rather alarmingly bureaucratic aspect.

Of 126 agricultural regions only about 87 have organized special aid to farm populations due to the fact that most of the specialists who should be assigned to farm medical units are employed in urban areas. The republic committee of the Professional Unions has not directed the attention of the Ministry of Public Health to this situation. Sharipov was particularly critical of the Central Council of the "Medik" Society; its members have the best of intentions but thus far nothing has materialized from all their talk.

The next report was given by Ye. T. Zykova, chief of the surgical section, Kalinin Oblast Hospital who discussed the training given to students studying to specialize. She stressed the importance of the professional unions in education.

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E. D. Bol'shakov, chief surgeon of the Obukhov Sanatorium reported rather disquieting facts regarding the ranks of agricultural medical workers. He placed the responsibility for this on the shoulders of the Ministry of Public Health as well as on the Central Committee of the Professional Unions, which has committed such blunders as withholding pay and, has failed to provide proper living conditions and recreational facilities. Certain local soviets and Party organizations fail to appreciate the importance of the agricultural doctor's work.

A. S. Panakushina, representative of the Krasnoyarsk Kray Committee of the Professional Unions reported on the rapid growth of public health services in the kray during the postwar period. She proudly stated that in the entire area stretching from the foothills of the Sayan Range to far-off Igarka and Tura there was not one unstaffed medical point; each regional center has at least five competent specialists. She also mentioned that unification of hospitals and polyclinics has been completed in 42 rayons of the kray. She commended the excellent work done by local Party organizations, but stated that much remained to be done, particularly in those regions where socialist competition is not operative.

The next report was by K. D. Getmanets, chief of the Dobryansk Agricultural Medical Unit, Ol'shansk Rayon, Odessa Oblast. He described the reconstruction of the public health services in the Ukraine. At present Dobryansk has a 45-bed hospital, a dispensary, and a physiotherapeutical and dental department. They are utilizing the "dispensary method" for treating malaria, cancer, and tuberculosis. Infectious diseases are almost unknown in this region and the audience was assured that malaria would be completely eliminated in 1949.

Z. M. Burtnek, professor of the medical faculty, Riga Medical University, stressed the importance of Communism's struggle against capitalism.

After this political speech, P. Ye. Kulakov, representative of the professional committee, Kazan Medical Institute, reported on the status of students at the Institute. He criticized the fact that the Central Committee of the Professional Unions failed to appreciate the importance of comprehensive training for young medical students. In addition, he stated that there were no posts in the Central Committee for instructors to provide for teaching students the importance of the medical unions in the medical profession. The Kazan Institute is understaffed, has poor accommodations for students, and needs a student's scientific council.

Many of the delegates stressed the necessity for reconstruction of the therapeutic and prophylactic network, training of personnel, and general problems of ideological and political training. Many also expressed uncertainty concerning optimum methods by which professional unions could aid the work of the Public Health Service. Among those who criticized the operations of their unions were O. F. Shaulina, representative of the Moscow Oblast Committee for Professional Unions and A. I. Ibatova, representative of the Kazakh Republican Committee of Professional Unions.

P. G. Demidov, director of the Administration of Health Resorts Along the Southern Shores of Crimea, stressed the importance of the re-establishment of all-Union sanatoriums. He stated that the operation of the sanatoriums has been greatly hampered due to excessive division of responsibility. Consequently, there was a shortage of personnel at seven sanatoriums, and the leading hospital in the region is open only 6 - 7 months out of the year. The reconstruction of living quarters for medical personnel is progressing very slowly and unfortunately, the local Party organizations totally disregard the problem.

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G. N. Beletskiy of the Ministry of Public Health USSR stressed the need for improving the quality of medical aid in 1949. He stated that in 1948 improvements had been made. There was a significant decrease in the number of workdays lost due to infectious diseases. Infant mortality was greatly reduced. In addition, great progress was made toward the elimination of such diseases as diphtheria, scarlet fever, and whooping cough. A total of 500 surgeons, 900 obstetricians and gynecologists, and 400 pediatricians had been assigned to medical units in agricultural communities. He said that this was possible only because of the excellent cooperation of the Ministry of Public Health USSR. On the other side of the ledger there is no reason for the high mortality rate at the Orlov Hospital, or the poor quality of traumatological aid in Kemerovo Oblast.

The high level of present-day medical science, the potential excellence of the medical network and the large numbers of medical students, if utilized properly, should certainly eliminate completely parasitic typhus, malaria, brucellosis, goiter, trachoma, diphtheria, gastrointestinal diseases, and lower the tuberculosis death rate. He commented on the noteworthy achievements of Ryazan Oblast in this direction. He warned, however, that the hoped-for results cannot be obtained by the work of any single public health organization but rather through the cooperation of soviet and Party organizations, the people themselves, and above all the professional unions.

Among others who read their reports during the morning session were A. L. Galperin, chief surgeon, Ivanovo Tuberculosis Dispensary; V. A. Malygina, representative of the republic committee for Professional Unions, Moldavian SSR; K. N. Cherepin, chief, Chair of Surgery, Tomsk Medical Institute; F. A. Dumitruk, representative of the Chernovits Oblast Maternity Service; L. D. Shteynberg, Voronezh; and F. A. Tsaturyan, representative of the republic committee of Professional Unions, Medical Workers of Armenia.

#### 23 March Evening Session

G. I. Govorin, representative of the Irkutsk Oblast Committee of the Medical Union opened the evening session with a report of achievements of medical workers in 1948. He mentioned the fact that there was considerable improvement in medical aid due to the unification of hospitals and polyclinics, but he criticized the Ministry of Public Health USSR and the RSFSR for neglecting to pay very much attention to streamlining, or encouraging inventive ability. Many new inventions are adopted too slowly. For example, a doctor at the Irkutsk Medical Institute invented a piece of equipment for administering local anesthesia. All tests showed the value of this apparatus; however, it was some 2 years later before it was accepted in general practice.

V. Yu. Akhunov, representative of the Azerbaijan Republic Committee, noted that frequently workers of professional unions attempt to do the work of the public health service organizations. This only tended to decrease the quality of medical aid and hampered proper functioning of both organizations.

K. V. Shaposhnikova, representative of the Tractor Factory Region, Stalingrad Public Health Department, discussed the unification of hospitals and polyclinics. She recommended that improved medical service be made available to the workers in the surrounding factories but urged the authorization of higher pay for the chief surgeons of unified medical enterprises. This is a problem that can be solved by the action of the Central Committee of the Professional Unions.

K. S. Stepanov, chief of the Rest Homes and Sanatoriums Administration, Central Committee of Professional Unions, noted some serious shortcomings of the administration.

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The next speaker, Ya. M. Kazymov, representative of the republican committee of the Turkmen SSR, praised the work done by doctors, medical assistants, and nurses in his republic. They have done heroic work in the numerous earthquake disasters and are constantly striving to improve the quality of medical service. The unification of hospitals and polyclinics made possible great opportunities for training new personnel.

S. G. Kobaladze, representative of the republic committee for Georgia, discussed the measures adopted in that republic for ideological and political training of medical personnel.

He was followed by A. E. Krutkina, chief surgeon of the Tyumen Oblast Eye Hospital, who commented on the shortcomings of the Public Health Service in her oblast. She claimed that this was due primarily to a severe shortage of medical personnel.

Ye. I. Smirnov, Minister of Public Health USSR, made the closing speech for the evening session. He credited the Party organizations, the public health departments, and the professional unions of medical workers, for the high level of medical service available to the peoples of the USSR, but pointed out where improvements could be made: many medical enterprises are too small, particularly polyclinics and dispensaries staffed by only two to four doctors, and hospitals which have less than 50 beds. Many isolated medical points have at best one doctor and one nurse, lack medicines and have almost no equipment at all. These small units must be replaced in the near future by consolidating as many of them as possible into convenient central locations. A survey taken in 1947 showed that only about a third of the agricultural communities had surgeons. The situation was even worse in the matter of certain specialists, e.g., ophthalmologists, otorhinolaryngologists, and venereologists. It is impossible to have a smooth functioning public health service without having a full complement of specialists. In the past 5 - 6 years there has been a program for the specialization of doctors. So far, some 70,000 have availed themselves of this service, but where are they?

It appears that many of them after taking this specialization course enter general practice instead of practicing their speciality.

There must be rapid completion of the unification program, improvement of the organization of rural regional hospitals, standardization of equipment for various medical enterprises, study of the duties of the public health service departments, particularly in the agricultural regions. More attention must be paid to the role of senior hospital surgeons in the general program for improving the quality of education afforded young medical students.

#### 24 March Morning Session

The first report was made by A. D. Sopova, representative of the Khabarovsk Kray Committee of Professional Unions, who criticized the Central Committee of the Professional Unions for their lack of interest in the Far Eastern regions. She said that there had been repeated withholding of pay and favoritism shown by the administrative organizations and medical enterprises.

L. D. Vasyakova, representative of the oblast committee, Chuvash ASSR, reported that the Central Committee of the Professional Unions was not functioning properly. Apparently, there is absolutely no liaison between the Central Committee, the Ministry of Public Health RSFSR, and regional and local committees of professional unions.

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M. T. Gusarenkova, representative of the Leningrad Oblast Committee of Professional Unions, was in complete agreement with some of the observations expressed in Ye. I. Smirnov's report. She claimed that there were serious defects noted in certain of the therapeutic and prophylactic enterprises in the city as well as in the oblast.

V. Ya. Shlapoberskiy, a Moscow professor gave an interesting report in which he analyzed the activity of various scientific agencies. Moscow Oblast has more than 4,000 doctors, surgeons, and candidates in medical science who participate in the activities of the Moscow Oblast Committee of the Professional Unions. He commended the general over-all functioning of this organization.

I. A. Insarov, Minister of Public Health Belorussian SSR, reported on the progress of the reconstruction of therapeutic and prophylactic enterprises and the elimination of medico-sanitation consequences of the war and occupation. In general, 87 percent of municipal hospital bed accommodations had been restored. Progress in rural areas, however, has exceeded that of urban by 27 percent. Much has been done to decrease the number of patients suffering from infectious diseases; nevertheless, much remains to be done. The most important task is the solution of various problems brought about by the unification of hospitals and polyclinics. The services offered by regional hospitals must be improved by making specialized aid available to agricultural communities. Unfortunately, the professional union organizations have not done as much as they might.

V. I. Dmitriyeva, representative of the Gor'kiy Oblast Committee for Professional Unions, criticized the narrow-minded attitude of the various professional union organizations and public health service organizations in her oblast.

Ye. K. Kiktenko, representative of VTSSPS, reported that the professional unions of medical workers had accomplished a great deal, particularly in cooperating with the Ministry of Public Health in the unification of hospital and polyclinic. However, he suggested that these unions give more help to local committees.

L. I. Medved', Minister of Public Health Ukrainian SSR, described in glowing terms the achievements of medical workers of the republic in rapidly restoring the medical network that was almost completely destroyed by the Hitlerite hordes. The medical organization in the Ukraine was completely rebuilt. In this program, Party and soviet organizations cooperated very well. Five new rayon hospitals in Kiev, 3 in Odessa, 3 in Nikolayev and about 100 other hospitals throughout the republic were put into operation. He urged the Central Committee of Professional Unions and the newspaper Meditsinskiy Rabotnik to conduct an investigation to determine which organizations and agencies are in need of improvement and recommend methods for implementation.

Other representatives who read reports at this session were: Z. G. Gryaznova, secretary, republic committee of Professional Unions Ukrainian SSR; T. P. Kositsyna, Omsk; N. A. Petrichenko, chief, Main Apothecary Administration, Ministry of Public Health RSFSR; Yu. Z. Dzhurayev, representative, Tadzhik Republic Committee of Professional Unions; M. D. Sumenkova, chief, cultural section, Central Committee of Professional Unions; V. K. Suprunov, professor, Kuban Medical Institute, and Deputy to the Supreme Soviet USSR; and G. V. Kashinisev, representative, river basin committee, Upper Volga Shipping Enterprises.

M. V. Il'in closed the session with his report.

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